

Knox Cottage  
1029 American Street  
Baton Rouge  
East Baton Rouge Parish  
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1129

HABS  
LA,  
17-BATRO,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

## THE KNOX COTTAGE

Location: 1029 America Street, between South 10th and 11th Streets, Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana. USGS Baton Rouge West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 15:674900:3369480.

Present Owner: Raymond Felton

Present Use: Private residence

Significance: The Knox Cottage is one of the few remaining Creole style cottages in Baton Rouge. This cottage type was quite prevalent in Louisiana vernacular architecture.

PART I. HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: circa 1890s. It appears that Knox Cottage was built between 1887, when N. King inherited five lots with a value of \$150, and 1909, when William N. Knox inherited one of those lots "with buildings and improvements thereon" valued at \$1,500. While Sanborn Insurance Map of 1981 does not include the Suburb Young area, 1908 map does show the Creole cottage. Mrs. Morris, who resided in the house from 1912, said that when her family moved into the cottage, the house had been standing for some time.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of property: "A certain lot or parcel of ground, together with the buildings and improvements thereon, situated in that part of the city of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, known as Suburb Young,...lot No. twelve (12) at Square two (2) or two hundred seven (207), said lot

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measuring 60 feet front on the North side of America Street by a depth between parallel lines of 112 feet 1 inch."

Conveyance Book 3, Folio 156, July 30, 1875. F.M. Young, N.K. Knox and B.C.C. Favrot had held various properties in common. N.K. Knox received lots 4, 8, 11, 12, 16 of Square 2 "to effect a partition of the unsold lots in Suburb Young." It appears that these three men were developing the area. There is no dollar value on this transfer.

Conveyance Book 9, Folio 412, January 27, 1887. In distribution of the estate of Nathan K. Knox and Mrs. Zippordle Le Bryn (spelling questionable, handwriting illegible), William J. Knox, N. King Knox and Mrs. Ella Knox, heirs, received "five certain lots of ground in that part of the city of Baton Rouge known as Suburb Young and designated on that plan thereof as lots 4, 8, 11, 12 and 16 in Square 2 acquired by N. K. Knox." The value of the five lots was \$150.

Conveyance Book 45, Folio 482, April 16, 1909. The property was divided among Mrs. Nancy Knox, Nathan K. Knox, William N. Knox, Louis N. Knox and Mrs. Ella Sherer, heirs of N. K. Knox, deceased. Each received one fifth of the estate. William N. received "Lot 12, Square 21, in Suburb Young, measuring 60 feet front depth of 112 feet 1 inch, together with buildings and improvements thereon", valued at \$1500.

Conveyance Book 48, Folio 260, July 18, 1912. William N. Knox to Pettus S. Gurney, the above property, \$1400.

Conveyance Book 311, Folio 129, March 23, 1926. The Estate of Pettus S. Gurney to Mrs. Lorinne Morris (Gurney's daughter), the above property, \$2,000.

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Conveyance Book 1941, Folio 57, November 30, 1966.

Corinne G. Morris to Raymond Felton, the above property, \$11,000.

4. Original plan and construction: This cottage originally consisted of four rooms with front and back galleries. The two entrance doors from the front gallery opened into two front rooms with a common chimney. The two additional rooms were just behind them. The kitchen and dining room were housed in a separate dependency behind the cottage, the gallery of which faced the back gallery of the cottage. The house was painted white with green trim.
5. Alterations and additions: Pettus S. Gurney made a number of alterations to the building when he acquired it in 1912. Extensions were added to the front and back gallery roofs to protect the porches. A bathroom was built by enclosing a portion of the rear (west) gallery. The kitchen and dining room dependency was joined to the house at a 90 degree angle forming an ell.

In the mid 1930s, Mrs. Morris made several changes in order to isolate a separate, self-contained apartment within the cottage. She divided the cottage in half lengthwise and enclosed the remaining portion of the rear gallery (the east side) to make a kitchen and bathroom. The existing bathroom was reduced in size and a hallway, leading from the cottage to the back dependency, was made.

In the late 1940s, Mrs. Morris made additional changes to accommodate central heating and to change the configuration of the rental unit. The original four-room Creole cottage became one unit and the kitchen and dining dependency became another.

The partition between the two rooms in the west side was removed. The hallway leading to the kitchen and dining room was closed up. A large closet was added across the northwest wall. On the east side of the house, the kitchen and bathroom were enlarged. A bedroom and separate entrance were added to the rear dependency on the west side. Inside the cottage, oak floors were added over the original pine floors. Asbestos shingles were installed over the original cypress siding and on the addition for better insulation.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Pettus S. Gurney, who acquired the cottage in 1912 and made alterations to it, was a plantation owner who raised cotton outside of Baton Rouge. He bought the cottage so that his daughters could attend school in Baton Rouge. His daughter, Mrs. Corinne G. Morris, whose family lived there for fifty-four years, supplied much of the historical and architectural information.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interview with Mrs. Corinne G. Morris,  
July 1978.

Conveyance Records, Parish of East  
Baton Rouge, Centroplex.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Sanborn Insurance Map of Baton Rouge,  
Sanborn-Perrins Map Co., 117 Broadway,  
New York, June 1891, 1908.

Prepared by Sybil McCormac Groff  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer, 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This Creole-style cottage features a false apron on the gallery roof, turned posts, and foliated brackets.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This one-story cottage has a four-bay front, 25' wide, x 66'-4".
2. Foundations: The structure is raised on one-foot piers composed of concrete and brick blocks in the center and poured concrete on the outside.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: The front (south) wall has the original clapboard siding. All the other wall surfaces have asbestos shingles over the original siding. The entire house is painted yellow with white trim, including the fan-like brackets on the inside of the front gallery. The doors, shutters and posts are dark brown.
4. Structural system: Wood framing.
5. Porches: Two concrete steps lead to the front gallery, which spans the width of the front (south) elevation of the cottage. The porch is recessed under the cottage roof, which is supported by turned posts and paired foliated brackets. A false apron for the roof is supported by rafters between the brackets. The rear gallery has three posts and two concrete steps.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The principal gallery has two doors, each with a two-light transom that opens outwards for ventilation. The doors are four-panel and they sit in plainly molded doorways. The back gallery has one door, with a transom, that opens into the west apartment kitchen and another that opens into the east apartment kitchen.

The apartment addition has one door facing south.

- b. Windows and shutters: The front elevation has two floor-length six-over-nine-light double-hung sash windows with louvered shutters flanking the two front doors. Both east and west elevations have two windows with six-over-six-light double-hung sashes in the gable ends. The eastern extension, containing the bathroom, has small six-over-six-light windows facing south and east. The west bathroom has a small one-pane window.

The kitchen addition on the east has double-hung sash windows facing north and east, with muntins on top and a plain light below. The rear gallery has a six-over-six-light double-hung sash window facing east and from the west apartment living room. This apartment also has four other double-sash windows, facing north and west from the kitchen, and north and west from the bedroom.

7. Roof: The steeply pitched roof has its gable ends oriented east to west. The kick in the front of the roof incorporated the eave extension. Asbestos sheathing covers the surface. The rear apartment has a gable roof with the ridge running north-south. The bedroom addition of the apartment has a gable roof running east-west.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The cottage consists of a living room with a large closet on the west (originally two rooms) and two bedrooms on the east. The bathroom and kitchen are off the north bedroom.

The kitchen door leads into a self-contained apartment which has a kitchen, living room, bedroom, bathroom, and closet.

2. Flooring: The three principal rooms in the cottage have three-inch stained and varnished wood floors. The kitchens and bathrooms have linoleum floors. The apartment unit has wood floors in the living room, bedroom and closet.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: The living room and northeast bedroom have acoustical tile on the twelve-foot ceilings and simulated wood paneling on the walls. The front (southeast) bedroom is wallpapered and has a plastered ceiling. The kitchen has a wainscoting of tile and painted plaster above. The rooms in the apartment wing are painted.
4. Openings: The original doors on the east between the two bedrooms and those leading into the kitchen remain. They are four-panel with architrave trim and moveable transom lights for ventilation.
5. Special decorative features: The windows and doors in the cottage all have architrave trim. Baseboards, about one foot high, are found throughout the cottage.



D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting: The cottage is located in an area originally called Suburb Young, which was developed in the late 19th century. There are some notable eclectic houses in the area; however, many of them are deteriorating.

Prepared by Sybil McCormac Groff  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
August, 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge, Department of Public Works, Division of Community Development. Under the auspices of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth Anderson, Principal Architect, the project was completed in the summer of 1978 at the HABS field office, Department of Architecture, Louisiana State University. The team was comprised of Sibyl McCormac Groff (Columbia University), project supervisor/historian; Timothy Allanbrook (Rhode Island School of Design), project foreman; architect Kate Johns (Arizona State University); and student architects William J. Graham (University of Maryland), Robert P. Louton (University of Arkansas), and George W. Steinrock, Jr. (University of Detroit).